

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY

CHARLES DICKENS

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED

"HOUSEHOLD WORDS"

No. 368. NEW SERIES.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1875.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

GRIFFITH'S DOUBLE.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOEY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," &c. &c.

BOOK I. CHAPTER III. THE MAN.

On the opposite side of the house from that on which John Pemberton's study and the sitting-rooms were situated, but also opening on a spacious verandah, and overlooking a flower-garden bounded by fine trees, was Mrs. Pemberton's sleeping apartment. Half an hour after she left the sick man and his nurse for the night, we find her sitting by the open window; a small table, on which a shaded lamp stands, by her side; and spread out before her gaze the still, solemn beauty of the garden, and its boundary of thick trees, under the light of the moon and the diamond stars, which hang in the steel-blue space, globes of light, as they do not hang in our misty heavens on this side of the world. The scene is supremely calm and beautiful, and the still air is scented with the subtle odours which the night extracts from the trees and the earth. Mrs. Pemberton has folded a scarlet shawl round her shoulders, and her rich dark hair is smoothly rolled at the back of her head. She is a very fair woman to look upon, a beautiful central object in that peaceful and lovely scene. So her husband thinks, when he joins her, presently, and at her bidding takes his place at the window too. "Are you very tired, John?" she asks him.

"No, love, not particularly. It has been a busy day, though."

"Did you get your letters and papers sent off?"

"Yes, fortunately. I had taken the

parcel for Meredith down to the coach, in fact, when the accident happened."

"So that they are quite off your mind?"

"Yes, quite. If this unfortunate thing had not occurred, I should have felt very light-hearted to-night, for everything is going as well as I could wish. I think you will approve of something that I have done, Mary, and I must tell you, even though in so doing I run counter to your one weakness."

"What is that?" she asked, with a rather uneasy smile.

"Your dislike to my mentioning my will. You never would let me talk to you, and consult you about it, you know, like a rational being taking the opinion of his best friend, and so I have had to draw up the document without the benefit of your advice."

"I—I would rather not know what it contains," said Mrs. Pemberton. "I confess it, John, I am superstitious about a will at any time, and my nerves are not over strong to-night. Please don't tell me anything. It is enough for me to know that your will is made."

"Very well then, I will only tell you this one thing. I have named my brother-in-law as co-guardian of Ida with yourself. I have written to inform him that I have done so, and I have requested Meredith to forward the document to him in advance of our arrival in England."

"And why?"

"Why? Because, my love, life is always uncertain, though I don't think; as I am sure you do, that it is endangered by the making of a will: my mind will be quite easy about you and Ida when I know that he is in possession of my wishes and intentions respecting you."

When one is taking so serious a step as that which we have resolved upon, it makes one look at everything, hold a general review and grand parade in fact, and a very good thing it is to do so. You don't object to the arrangement, do you?"

"Certainly not. I should be very glad to have the advice and assistance of anyone whom you esteem and trust, if I should have the great misfortune to survive you. And it would be well for Ida, I am sure. But that will never be, dear John. God is too merciful."

She was strangely moved, and trembling.

He saw it, and said, very cheerfully and fondly:

"There, dearest, you have swallowed your dose, and that is all about it. I should not have liked to do this without telling you, but there's an end of the matter, and of our talk too, for it is very late. What a lovely night! We shall not have such skies and stars in England."

He stepped outside the window and stood on the verandah. His wife touched him on his arm.

"Just one question more, John. Supposing we were both gone, what provision have you made in that case for Ida's future?"

"In that case, her uncle would be her sole guardian."

"Thank you, John; that is all I wanted to know. But now, I have something to say to you. So far from our talk having come to an end, it has only just begun."

John Pemberton, standing on the verandah, gazed in surprise at his wife. There was a strange vibration in her voice, an anxious look in her eyes, and a bright spot of colour burned in each of her cheeks.

"Of course, if you wish, love," he said; "but what can you have to say that will not keep until to-morrow, especially after so trying a day as this has been?"

His mind reverted in an instant to the thoughts which had troubled him at supper time—to the idea that there was something relative to their return to England in her heart, which she had not told him.

"Come here," she said, taking his hand, and drawing him gently towards her. "Once on a time, John, in our silly days—of courtship you know—"

"Our wise—at least my wisest days—"

"You used to like to sit upon my footstool, and hold my hands in yours. Sit there now, John, and hold my hands in

yours, and let me tell you something which must be told before another day begins for either of us."

He saw that she was in earnest, and that she was troubled, and he quietly obeyed her, seating himself at her feet, and taking her hands in his.

"Is that right?" he asked her.

"That is right."

"Go on, then, and tell me whatever there is in your mind to tell me."

His clear and honest face looked up at her, full of serene confidence.

"John," she said, "I want you to carry your memory back to a day, very dear and memorable in our lives—to the day when you asked me to become your wife."

"Easily done, dear—I never forget it."

"Recall it all carefully, John. I was only a governess, and not too happy in my place, and you were a rich and influential man, whom any girl in the colony would have been thought very lucky to please. Do you remember what you said to me, John, when you asked me?"

"Of course I remember it. How should I forget? I said what it behoved me to say—that I was a middle-aged man, with a dead first love in my life, asking for the hand of a beautiful young girl. I said I must not demand too much, I must not expect a romantic passion; that I would be more than content, indeed, thrice blessed, if I should win from her the calm and true affection which makes the best happiness of home. Was it not this I said, Mary, while I claimed for myself the privilege of loving you with a deeper and stronger passion, though it was not first love, than I had ever felt before, or believed that I could feel, for a woman? Have I forgotten, Mary? Do I remember aright? Was this what I said?"

He pressed the hands he held in his, and kissed them like the lover he was still.

"That was what you said, John. Now, tell me, was not this what I said?"

Her voice faltered a little, she grew paler, and there was a tremulous motion in her hands which made him clasp them closer.

"That I could give you what you asked—the true and grateful love of all my life; the devotion of a wife to yourself—the best man I had ever known;—the care and, in so far as it could be possible for one not her mother, the love of a mother for your child. And then I told you that I, too, had had a first love; there was no danger

that I should wake up some day to the discovery that the love which I could give you was not the ideal love which transforms the world, and makes the common life heaven to a woman, because I had dreamed that dream and it had vanished for ever, and left my mind's eye clear of phantasms. You remember all this, John?"

"I remember it all, Mary. And I wonder more and more why you remind me of it now."

"I will tell you soon. You answered me after a noble fashion, John—a fashion which became you, as all I have ever heard you say, or known you to do, has become you. You told me that I was none the less dear to you for the fact, and all the dearer that I had told it to you fearlessly; and you asked me only one question—was the man living? I told you that he was dead to me, by his own act—that he had preferred another to me, and was at the other side of the world with her. You remember that?"

"Yes, Mary, I remember that."

"And you have never had any misgiving or jealous notion about the man whom I had loved—who was still alive? You never fancied that I was thinking of him?"

"What a strange question, Mary. Of course I never had any such notions or thoughts. Were you not my own true wife, the blessing and delight of my life, the sunshine of my home? How should I have worried myself with such ideas? If you had remembered the man, if you had thought of him, do you imagine I should have blamed you? I had not forgotten, I don't forget now, when we are happiest, my pretty young wife, whom I once loved, as well as I could love, then; and I never supposed you had forgotten. My dear, why—why do you rake up these things now—these things that have never come to us in any way before? It seems like a morbid fancy to me, or as if there were something wrong with you. Why do you do it?"

"I will tell you soon," she repeated. "Have patience with me, and answer my questions; you will understand them by-and-by. I have asked you to look back to five years ago, and you have done so; now I only ask you to look back to—yesterday."

The clock upon the mantelpiece had rung out the hour—one—while she was speaking, and she paused to let the silvery sound pass away.

"Do you remember what you said to

me about my seeming indifference to the prospect of our return to England? Do you remember what I said about my having no ties, and that all my world was here?"

"I remember."

"And you believed me when I said it?"

"Believed you, Mary? What a question! Of course."

She paused, and her gaze into his face grew deep and tender. She loosed one hand from his hold, and laid it on his head.

"John," she said, "I am going to tell you what you never asked me—the story of my first love. Why I tell it to you to-night you will soon know. I was left, on the death of my father, to the poverty which too often befalls girls gently born and reared in England, when their fathers have been professional men whose lives have been a life-long struggle. The usual wretched alternatives in such cases—the governess or useful companion careers—were open to me, and my relatives, who were few and poor, thought they had done a great thing for me, when they got me a situation as companion to an elderly widow lady, who lived comfortably at Brighton. I went to her house. She was a gentlewoman, the sister of an Irish nobleman, and I began the dullest life that ever a young girl with high spirits and perfect health was condemned to. Mrs. Southwood was not in the least unkind, but she was elderly, in delicate health, and a childless widow, who lived in the past, and had no sympathy with the present, or comprehension of the dreariness of my life. I had a comfortable room, plenty to eat and drink, a drive in a close carriage with herself and her pug every day, a moderate amount of occupation in reading books which did not interest me, and in writing her letters, and I had 'early hours'—she made a great point of early hours—what could I want more? I often asked myself the question, for I had a misgiving that I was a rebel against Fate in yielding to the depression and weariness which beset me; but I could not resign myself to the want of interest in my life. Mrs. Southwood visited only one family at Brighton, that of a clergyman, Mr. Toulmin. They were not very lively people, but they were better than nothing; and Clara, the eldest girl, took a fancy to me, chiefly, I believe, because I never tired of her confidences respecting her betrothed lover, a lieutenant in the navy, who was away in some distant part of the world

with his ship. One day Clara Toulmin told me that her father was about to take a pupil, a young man, who was going into the Church in order to take up a family living in Ireland. He had been a short time in the navy, and was rather wild, she added, but her father would be sure to bring him all right, and it could not be objectionable in any way, as she (Clara) was 'engaged.' The pupil arrived, and was introduced to Mrs. Southwood, who discovered that he was a distant connection of her own. She liked the young man very much, and she brightened up in his pleasant company. He was very handsome and pleasant, with a careless way about him as if everything were a good joke and nothing mattered much, which is, I suppose, peculiarly captivating to people with whom life is dull, and who have to think very much about small things. I don't suppose she ever thought about me, and of course she was not bound to do so, when she made him free of her house. I have told you enough, John. Mr. Toulmin's pupil fell in love, or fancied he fell in love, with me; I fell in love with him without any fancy at all about it. No one could have wondered at it, or blamed me, who had seen him then. It was all a secret of course, and he was full of the delightful romance of such a secret. He would study hard, he would get the family living, he would marry me, and we should be happy ever after."

Mrs. Pemberton paused, but her husband only said:

"Go on, love."

"I had nobody to confide in, nobody to advise me, and I agreed to it all. I trusted him entirely, and I was perfectly happy then. He did study; he did go on steadily; and nothing occurred to trouble my peace or to interfere with my dreams, until Mrs. Southwood took a fancy for going abroad in the spring, and he and I had to part. Mrs. Southwood was quite sorry to bid him good-bye, and she told him he should have an invitation to the house of her brother—the Irish lord; she called him 'his cousin'—for the vacation. He and I parted with every protestation of affection and fidelity. For some time he wrote to me constantly, and I was content. I need not dwell on this, John; my story is nearly ended. Before Mrs. Southwood returned to England his letters to me were discontinued; the two or three which I wrote, to inquire into the cause of his silence, remained unanswered. I suffered—

need I tell you what I suffered? We returned, and went to Brighton. Clara Toulmin and her mother called on the day after our arrival, and they had not been many minutes in the room when Mrs. Toulmin mentioned her husband's pupil, and 'supposed Mrs. Southwood had heard the news.' She asked what Mrs. Toulmin meant, and was answered that he had gone to Ireland, and was engaged to be married to a nobleman's daughter—to no other, in fact, than Mrs. Southwood's own niece. The young lady's father was understood to object, but the young lady to be determined, and Mr. Toulmin supposed, 'if his pupil could only keep steady enough to be ordained, and not get into any scrapes beforehand,' the marriage would take place. Mrs. Southwood was roused to interest now that the young man's character might have a serious meaning to 'her own people.' She questioned her visitors, and it came out that there had been a good deal to complain of while he was with them. I do not know how I got out of the room, or what I did when I left it, but I remember that I escaped just as Mrs. Toulmin said her father's pupil was staying at Westport, near 'his lady-love's home,' which was in the county of Galway, and that Mrs. Southwood was very cross because I was too ill that evening to read to her, and gave me to understand that delicacy of health, or 'nerves,' or low spirits in a companion were by no means in her bargain. I wrote to him, I told him the story I had heard, and that I did not believe it, but his long silence required, and I demanded, an explanation. He answered my letter, John, and told me the story was true!"

"Scoundrel!"

"No, John; not in that, at least; only weak, vain, and mistaken, like myself. He threw himself, he said, on my mercy and forbearance. If I should decide on revealing what his conduct to me had been, I could be revenged on him indeed, for I should ruin all his hopes. He had ceased to love me; he loved another; he implored my pardon. That was all. I answered his letter in these words—'You are free;' and I wrapped up his letters to me in the paper on which I wrote them. The next day I told Mrs. Southwood that I must leave her. She did not care for any explanations, my vague excuse, 'family circumstances,' was sufficient for her. I went to London, got

a respectable lodging, and set to work to procure a situation with some one going abroad. I succeeded as you know, came out to Sydney, and had been living there one year when you and I met, only six months before the day which I asked you to recall. That is my story, John. Not an uncommon one, I daresay, and, seeing how it has ended, and how happy I am, not one to make much of or remember. But now I come to the other points—the reason why I tell it to you to-night; and the bearing of it on my feelings about our going to England.”

“Stop a minute, Mary. Did this fellow marry the lord’s daughter?”

“I don’t know, but I think not. I looked long and anxiously for an announcement of the marriage, but none ever met my eye, and no news of it, or of him, ever reached me. And now, John, let me tell you this, first. When it was decided that we were to return to England, after these happy, happy years, in which I had outlived all trace of grief, and found all my life and love in you and our home, it came back to me in a strange way, which made me uneasy. I could not banish the idea that I should hear of him, or see him, and I was angry with myself; I was jealous for the entire and perfect absorption of my past and present life into yours, that there could be pain or embarrassment in the probability, or even the certainty. I don’t, I can’t explain it well, John, but I had almost a superstitious dread that Fate was going to intervene against me—that there was a menace to our peace in this resolution of yours—something more to be dreaded and grieved for, than the parting with the dear home, where we had been so happy for so long.”

“Feeling this so strongly, dear, why did you not tell it to me sooner; and why did you so positively deny that you disliked our going to England, only yesterday?”

“Because it was wrong, and foolish, and faithless; because only yesterday I took myself strongly to task for it, and determined to put it away from me, knowing it was right that we should go, and that your child should have the future of her life as you wished it to be. I had conquered it, I had put it away, and my heart was free from all its sinking, my mind was free from every cloud, when you came across the lawn to me in the evening, and told me they were carrying Mr. Randall into the house.”

“And has anything arisen, since, to trouble you on this point, dear?”

“John,” she said, almost in a whisper, and bending her face until it touched his hair, “Edward Randall is the man!”

SOME BAD OLD INDIAN CUSTOMS.

SOME years have gone by, since there was thought to be a good deal in Lord Macaulay’s sneer that the English, if they were suddenly turned out of India, would leave behind them few traces of their empire except pyramids of emptied beer-bottles, and the influence of European rule in the East is rated in these days at a juster value. But, even now, there is hardly a clear understanding of how much we have really done to improve the condition of the natives of our great dependency, not only by the importation of Christian manners and customs, and by covering the country with railways, telegraphs, and beneficial public works, but in the less brilliant, but even more useful, direction of sternly and successfully stamping out the cruel and bloody traditions and habits of the past.

It may, therefore, at the present time, be interesting to glance at a few of the horrible practices which we found in India, and the improving of which off the face of the earth gives us some right to say that our Eastern rule has not been altogether powerless for good. Of these, perhaps the most deeply rooted, and the most troublesome to destroy, were the burning of widows; female infanticide; the practice of human sacrifice; and, worst perhaps of all, Thuggee.

Sati—the Sutte of our youthful days, and an ancient “custom of the country”—has so completely passed away from among the characteristic institutions of India, that the Prince of Wales will hardly meet with a single European who has ever witnessed the performance of that hideous rite. Though an immemorial usage, Sati is nowhere enjoined in the sacred books of the Hindoos, and cannot claim a divine sanction even from the Brahminical point of view. According to the Canarese, it derived its origin from the unpleasant tendency of their married women to free themselves from disagreeable husbands, by administering poison to them in their food. In self-defence, therefore, it was decreed by the

male law-makers, that widows should suffer themselves to be burned alive with the bodies of their deceased husbands, the only alternative being a life of shame, misery, and destitution. Reconciling themselves to the inevitable, women soon came to regard it as an honour, as well as a duty, to mingle their ashes with those of the loved one, and it is recorded that fifteen concubines of one of the chiefs of Kutch sought, and obtained, permission to offer themselves as a sacrifice on his funeral pyre. As a rule, however, it was only the principal wife who enjoyed this fatal privilege, though Dr. Claudius Buchanan mentions a case which occurred only three miles from Calcutta, in the early part of the present century, when three wives followed their departed lord to the region of shadows. The man had been a Koolin Brahman, who had possessed twelve wives—a moderate number for a member of that sanctified fraternity, with whom it was no uncommon thing to have scores of wives scattered over the country. Of these three, "one was a venerable lady having white locks, who had long been known in the neighbourhood. Not being able to walk, she was carried in a palanquin to the place of burning; and was then placed by the funeral pile. The two other ladies were younger: one of them had a very pleasing and interesting countenance. The old lady was placed on one side of the dead husband, and the two other wives laid themselves down on the other side; and then an old Brahman, the eldest son of the deceased, applied his torch to the pile with unaverted face. The pile suddenly blazed, for it was covered with combustibles; and this human sacrifice was completed amidst the din of drums and cymbals, and the shouts of Brahmans." On the same authority we learn that within a circle of thirty miles from Calcutta, no fewer than two hundred and seventy-five widows perished in this frightful manner in the year 1803, while between the 15th of April and the 15th of August of the following year, at least one hundred and fifteen more followed their example.

The Canarese, in the early part of the last century, used to dig a shallow pit, ten feet by six feet, which they filled up with logs of wood, placing erect at one end a ponderous piece of timber, weighing five hundred pounds or thereabout, to which a cord was attached. When all

was ready, oil and clarified butter were poured upon the wood, and the corpse, decently shrouded, laid in the middle of the pile. A torch was then applied by the nearest male relative of the deceased, and, as the flames leaped up, the devoted widow took leave of her friends and acquaintances, and, with cheerful countenance, walked once or twice round the blazing heap, scattering flowers and repeating a form of prayer or invocation. Suddenly she would spring on to the burning logs, amidst a tremendous din of discordant music, and the frantic shouts of the bystanders. At the same instant a Brahman pulled the cord, and the erect beam fell heavily upon the living and the dead, cutting off all means and hope of escape. At times, of course, the hapless victim would shrink back at the last moment, appalled by the fierceness of the flames; but it was then all too late for second thoughts. The surrounding Brahmans would thrust her back with long poles, while her agonising shrieks were drowned in the uproar of drums, trumpets, and cymbals, heightened by the multitudinous yells of the spectators. Such instances of natural timidity, were, however, of comparatively rare occurrence, for when there was reason to suspect a premature collapse of resolution, narcotics were previously administered, and the stupefied victim fell upon the pile she had neither courage nor strength to ascend. A case of Sati, in which a certain degree of grim humour was manifested, is mentioned by Captain Hamilton, an intelligent navigator, who traded along the coasts of the Indian peninsula between 1688 and 1723. A young woman, who had exchanged love tokens with a neighbouring swain, was, nevertheless, given in marriage by her parents to another man, who died very shortly afterwards. Electing to be burned with his ashes, the widow cast her eyes around, and espied among the spectators her former lover. Beckoning to him to approach, as though she wished to bid him a last farewell, she suddenly threw her arms tightly round him, and, dragging him on to the pile, held him in her embrace until both were reduced to ashes.

Now and again, though very rarely, it fell to the happy lot of an English magistrate to succeed in rescuing a miserable creature from this dreadful form of death, but only to condemn her to a life of contumely and social degradation. An instance of this kind is related by Mrs.

Fanny Parks, in her Wanderings of a Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque. A Hindu corn-chandler, whose little shop stood at the entrance of her compound, having succumbed after a brief illness, his widow announced her intention of being burned with his body. In vain the magistrate interposed, promising protection and a pension for life; in vain, remembering that one who has made this vow may not touch food or water from the hour of her husband's death until his incineration, did he defer the completion of the rite for forty-eight hours. She remained steadfast to her purpose, and at that time Sati had not yet been declared a criminal offence. The pyre was therefore constructed in the usual manner, and the corpse placed upon the top. As an immense crowd had gathered together, guards were stationed to maintain order, and to prevent any undue pressure being put upon the victim. At the appointed time the widow arrived, robed in red attire, and, after bathing in the Ganges, applied the lighted brand. When the fuel was fairly kindled she calmly mounted the pile, and seating herself at one end, rested her husband's head on her lap, repeating the usual formula, "Ram, Ram, Sati." Presently the wind drove the raging flames upon her, and she was seen to move her limbs in agony. On a sudden impulse of pain and terror she sprang to her feet and approached the side, but was driven back by one of the police, who threatened her with his sword, and was instantly ordered off to prison by the magistrate. The poor wretch then leaped to the ground, rushed into the river, and extinguished the fire that had seized upon her dress. Her brothers-in-law, who would have succeeded to her husband's shop and little store of eight hundred rupees at her death, cried aloud—as, indeed, did all the mob—"Cut her down! Knock her on the head with a bamboo! Tie her hands and feet, and throw her in again!" and an ugly rush was made towards the pyre; but the European spectators and the police stood firm and repulsed the onslaught. Then the victim, who had been slightly burned on the legs and arms, having drunk a few mouthfuls of water from the river, declared her readiness to reascend the pile, but was stopped by the magistrate. Laying his hand upon her shoulder, and rendering her impure by his touch, he reminded her that by Hindoo law it was forbidden to

any one who had quitted the pyre to mount it a second time, but promised to take her under the protection of the British Government. The inhuman rite was thus frustrated, to the disgust of the Hindoos and to the disappointment of the Mussulmans, who had come to witness the exciting spectacle of a woman being burned to death of her own accord.

General Sleeman was less fortunate in his strenuous attempt to rescue an old woman on the banks of the Nerbudda, whose husband died on Tuesday, the 24th of November, 1829. Scarcely had the breath of life departed, when she signified her intention by exclaiming, "Ram, Ram, Suth!" The English officer, however, refused his sanction, and sent a police-guard to prevent the sacrifice. On the Wednesday the dead body was reduced to ashes, while the widow sat on a rock in the bed of the river, resolutely abstaining from any refreshment save, occasionally, a little pân. For five whole days did the poor old creature remain at her post, unmoved by the entreaties even of her own relatives, who were moved to pity by her age and sufferings. To convince them of her inflexibility, she put on the coarse red turban worn by Satis, and broke her bracelets, an act that rendered her an outcast, and precluded all return to her family. On Saturday morning the English magistrate rode over to the spot, in the hope that, by large promises, aided by her protracted abstinence, he might prevail upon her to abandon her fatal resolution. He found her still seated on the rock, holding a cocoanut in each hand, with a brass plate before her, containing a little undressed rice and a few flowers. She spoke quite collectedly, and said that her soul had been five days with her husband beside the rising sun. Committing her children to the care of the British Government, she continued, "I go to attend my husband, Omed Sing Opuddea, with whose ashes on the funeral pile mine have been already three times mixed. . . . My soul is with Omed Sing Opuddea, and my ashes must here mix with his." Fixing her eyes on the distant horizon, she added: "I see them together, under the bridal canopy." For the first time in her long married life she had pronounced the name of her husband, a thing which no Hindoo wife will ever do. No more convincing proof could be desired of her belief that her own spirit had already passed away to do loving duty to her husband's,

and that her only tie to life was "a little earth," which still remained to be mixed with his ashes. To have refused any longer to accede to her wishes could have had no other effect than to condemn her to a lingering death by starvation. The prohibition was accordingly withdrawn—a boon gratefully accepted by the faithful and devoted being, who then bathed in the river, and while the pyre was preparing, called for and ate a little pân. The arrangements being completed, she placidly approached, supported on either side by her eldest son and nephew, and, casting up her eyes to Heaven, sorrowfully murmured, "Why have they kept me five days from thee, my husband?" Having walked round the pile by herself, praying in a low voice, and throwing on to it a few flowers, she quietly stepped into the midst of the flames, and, arranging herself as if reclining on a couch, died without uttering a single cry. This old woman had formed the resolution of undergoing this rite thirteen years before, on seeing the beautiful little temples that had been erected over the ashes of her aunt and two other female relatives, who had died as Satis. Her belief in a former life took the shape of remembering her husband and herself as having been three times united in previous phases of existence, while the recreant widow described by Mrs. Parks averred that she had been six times married to, and burned with, the husband whose remains she abandoned in their seventh union. Not unfrequently a widow was burned, holding in her hands the turban or other article of apparel—accompanied, perhaps, by the horoscope—of her husband, who may have died at a distance from his home, and even many months previously. The records of the Supreme Court of Criminal Judicature refer to several cases of children, only nine years old, having been permitted or forced by their relatives to preserve the honour of the family by their self-sacrifice.

The British Government had for some time striven to discourage and discredit Sati, but timidly shrank from a collision with native prejudices and traditions. It was reserved for Lord William Bentinck to earn the gratitude of Hindoo widows, and the respect of the educated classes in India, by boldly denouncing Sati as wilful murder, and placing it in the category of crimes against the person. In the semi-independent States the barbarous superstition lingered yet a while longer; but it

is now universally prohibited; and so long as the British supremacy is maintained, the horrid rite will never again be perpetrated in India.

Though confined to certain provinces, the extent to which the practice of female infanticide has been carried in India is perfectly appalling. In two districts alone, those of Kattiawar and Kutch, the annual slaughter of female infants, until the early part of the present century, could not have been less than three thousand; and it is stated that the custom had been in force for quite a thousand years. If these figures be correct, and they are probably rather under than in excess of the actual facts, no fewer than three millions of female children have been cruelly murdered by a population estimated, at the present day, at considerably less than the number of murders committed by themselves and their forefathers, since this unnatural practice was first introduced. It was not until the year 1805 that any suspicion of this monstrous crime was entertained by the Indian Government, and its discovery seems to have been made in the course of conversation with some native gentlemen, by the Hon. Jonathan Duncan, then Governor of Bombay. That truly benevolent man lost no time in instituting measures for the suppression of the evil, and through the zealous and indefatigable exertions of Colonel Walker and Mr. J. P. Willoughby, not many years elapsed before the chief offenders, the Jadeja Rajpoots, pledged themselves to relinquish the practice.

When resident at Benares in 1789, Mr. Duncan had previously discovered that the Rajkoomar Rajpoots, of Jounpore, were guilty of the murder of their female infants, their alleged motive being the difficulty of finding suitable husbands for their daughters, without incurring a ruinous expense. The chiefs were easily induced to enter into a covenant to desist for ever from this odious crime; but the promise was speedily forgotten, and many years passed over before the British Government seriously applied itself to the extirpation of infanticide in the Northwest provinces. Nothing, indeed, was done until 1836, when Mr. Thomason, afterwards lieutenant-governor, while engaged in making the settlement of a small district, was surprised to find that not a single girl existed within its boundaries. No preventive measures were

even then introduced, but through moral influence the lives of ninety-two Rajpoot girls were saved in the course of the next two years. The amendment, however, did not last, for in 1855 the proportion of girls in twenty-eight villages, under six years, to boys of the same age, was thirty-seven to three hundred and thirty-nine; while in eleven villages there were none under six, and, in eight, no female children at all!

In 1842, Mr. Unwin, collector of Mynpoorie, while employed in revising the ordinary settlement, with a view to lower the revenue demand, in consequence of the great famine of 1838, observed that not a single Chohan female, young or old, was anywhere to be seen. The Chohans are, perhaps, the most noble and exclusive of all the Rajpoot tribes, and for centuries no female infant had been suffered to live a single hour in the old Rajpoot fort that overlooks the valley of the Eesun river. The birth of a son or grandson to the raja was always announced by the discharge of firearms, while the birth of a daughter was regarded as a source of shame and vexation. Through Mr. Unwin's vigilance, however, a granddaughter, born in 1845, was preserved, and the Government despatched a letter of congratulation and a dress of honour to the raja. The first fruits of this example were shown in the threefold increase of female infants in the district during the next twelve months, the number rising from fifty-seven to one hundred and eighty, and in May, 1851, no fewer than one thousand two hundred and sixty-three girls were registered, six years of age and under, while two hundred and twenty-eight had died of natural causes. Of boys of the same ages, however, there were two thousand one hundred and sixty-one alive, and in 1850 it was ascertained that the proportion of boys to girls in sixty-six Chohan villages was as two thousand seven hundred and seventy to two thousand and four. In the neighbouring districts of Etawah, also, it is found that there were eight thousand two hundred and fifty-three boys of ten years and under to four thousand five hundred and eighty-nine girls. The good work begun by Mr. Unwin was completed by Mr. Raikes, who, in 1851, induced the Rajpoot chiefs of Agra, Etawah, Farruckabad, and Patalia to meet those of Mynpoorie, when certain resolutions were adopted, which cut away the chief ground for infanticide,

by regulating the marriage dower and expenses according to four social grades, from the rajah or thakoor, down to the "decent people," who could give only one rupee with their daughter.

But although it was well known that female infanticide was still the rule in the Punjab, and in many parts of the North-western provinces, it was not until the close of 1855 that the Government was moved to appoint Mr. W. R. Moore a special commissioner for its suppression. Mr. Moore's labours and life were unhappily abruptly terminated by the Sepoy revolt; but from his partial investigation it appeared that in the Benares division alone there were three hundred and eight villages in which the crime prevailed, and sixty-two in which not a single girl was to be found under six years of age. In the Goruckpore district alone there were ten villages with one hundred and seventeen boys to twenty-six girls, twenty-five villages with two hundred and sixty-one boys to fifty-one girls, and thirty villages with three hundred and forty-three boys to fifty-four girls. From that time, however, the crime has been rapidly dying out, though it would be rash to affirm that it never takes place. To a great extent the alleged motives have been removed by the limitation of marriage expenses, the gradual extinction of social prejudices, and, above all, by the danger of detection and punishment. The causes commonly assigned were threefold: the difficulty of paying an adequate dower, a deep-rooted aversion from the appellations of "soosun" and "sala"—father-in-law and brother-in-law—and the convenient belief that it was unlucky to spare the life of a female child. The marriage expenses were certainly a serious consideration. In the first place, if a marriageable Hindoo girl be not betrothed, she is held to be disgraced and her family dishonoured; but a Rajpoot maiden can be married only to a Rajpoot belonging to her own caste, and not in her own subdivision, but, if possible, in a higher one. This promotion can only be gained by a heavy payment of money, and the higher the sub-division the greater is the difficulty of making a superior, or even an equal, match. A great point was, therefore, gained when the Raja of Mynpoorie consented to accept four hundred and fifty pounds as the marriage portion of his bride, whereas his ancestors had demanded from ten thousand to fifteen thousand pounds. Then, it was customary to

lavish immense sums of money upon the Brahmans, and upon the bards who recited the genealogical tree, and sang of the deeds that were done by the bridegroom's forefathers in the brave days of old. "The dahirna emptied his coffers," says a Rajpoot poet, "on the marriage of his daughter with Pirthiraj, but he filled them with the praises of mankind." The Rana of Oodipoor, according to Colonel Tod, bestowed upon the chief bard gifts valued at ten thousand pounds, besides large sums squandered upon nautch-dancers, jugglers, minstrels, and mendicants. When it was known that a well-to-do Rajpoot was about to give his daughter in marriage, these idle vagabonds would swarm around his house overnight, travelling a distance of twenty to thirty miles to be present. As the procession swept by they would demand a rupee for every one of themselves, for every follower, every horse, and every dog in their company. If the bride's father demurred, he was pushed about, dust was thrown on him, and the vilest abuse poured on himself and his family. It may be easily supposed that the Rajpoots were by no means displeased when the British Government interfered to repress these disturbances, and readily agreed to reform the whole system pertaining to the marriage portion and expenses. It was less easy to get rid of the second objection to female children, arising from the dislike to be called "father-in-law" or "brother-in-law." In former times it was a common thing for Rajpoot warriors to "carry off, by force of arms or stratagem, the marriageable women of the cognate tribes. This practice gave new life to the old Hindoo superstition of the inferior position of the father-in-law. The son-in-law became, more than ever, the social superior of his father-in-law. If the wife were henceforth a slave, the wife's father need expect but little courtesy or consideration. A Rajpoot of the present day (1851) is subject to his son-in-law, hand and foot; can refuse him nothing; and, without disgrace, cannot accept so much as a meal at his hands." To save himself from such a painful and degrading position, the Rajpoot father adopted the easy expedient of putting his female children to death, as soon as they were born. The actual murderers, however, were the midwives, the attendant relatives, or even the mother. The ordinary method was to place the new-

born babe in an earthen pan, and suffocate it. If perchance the little one was spared, it was almost invariably through the sudden interposition of the father; and if death were not inflicted immediately after birth, there was no further danger of violence being offered. A Rajpoot landholder, at Busora, told General Sleeman that he happened to be in his field at the time of his wife's confinement; but, as soon as he heard that she had given birth to a female child, he hastened to his home with all speed, and arrived just in time to save its life. The female relatives had put his babe into an earthen pot, which they had buried beneath the floor of the hut, and had lighted a fire over the spot. Scattering the fire, he dug up the jar and found his child still alive, but with two of its fingers much scorched. He added that both his wife and himself were very fond of the little girl, who was then about two years old.

The chivalrous Rajpoots, the noblest of all Indian races, would, perhaps, have been slightly disgusted, had they been told that the same practice, for very similar reasons, prevailed among the barbarous Khonds, a branch of the despised aborigines. These also object to the trouble and expense incidental to daughters, and prefer to expose them at their birth in the jungles. It is their custom, however, for the bridegroom to give farm-stock to the value of fifty or seventy rupees to the bride's father, the repayment of which he can exact should his wife leave him to live with another man—and, as a rule, every woman changes her husband four or five times. Her father is naturally disconcerted at being suddenly called upon to refund the price he had received for his daughter, and is further annoyed every time she repairs to a new home. The Khonds have, besides, a belief that women are the cause of the chief evils of life, and accordingly keep down the number to a minimum. They also believe that souls "return to animate human forms, in the families in which they have been first born and received." This reception, however, is not completed until after the seventh day, when the name is given. If, therefore, the child die previous to that ceremony, there is no chance of the soul returning, so that there will be one female less in future generations. In some Khond villages of one hundred houses, not a single female child was to be seen twenty years ago.

LETTERS AND LETTER-WRITERS.

WITS AND HUMORISTS.

I NEVER plunge down that dark passage in Fleet-street, that leads deep into the dusky barracks of the lawyers, and finally, as Purgatory leads to Paradise, opens into the broad river-side parade-ground of the old Knights Templars, without meeting (in the spirit) a certain small, humbly-clad, and thoughtful-looking boy.

He is the son, as he always tells me, of Mr. John Lamb, clerk to Mr. Salt, one of the benchers of the Inner Temple, and he is on his way, as his blue gown and canary-coloured stockings might show me, to Christ's Hospital, where he is at present struggling with Phædrus and other learned nightmares of childhood. There is no sorrow in his eyes, and he skips along past the fountain, where he always stops to listen to the music of the dripping water, tossing in the air his little muffin cap, thoughtless and happy as one of the garden sparrows. I notice that the boy stammers slightly, and, as he runs past me, I observe that he is a little flat-footed, which gives him a peculiar walk.

By old bookstalls in the City, too, I sometimes have dreams of a far different person, yet the same. I see him there, turning wistfully over a folio. He is a middling-sized man, now very thin and shrunk; he is dressed in rusty black, and wears old-fashioned black gaiters. His fine head and thoughtful brow look too large for his mannikin body and thin legs. His face is brown, his nose large and somewhat Jewish; but his eyes, as his friend Barry Cornwall expresses it, seem "as if they could pick up pins and needles." A half-melancholy smile comes rather over his brow than his eyes, as he glances for a moment at an odd volume of Ford's plays. That is Mr. Charles Lamb: he is a clerk at the India House, and is on his way back to his cottage at Enfield, with a fine copy of Waller's poems in his coat-tail pocket.

Nor do I forget this lovable man, whose life was tinged so deeply with sorrow, whenever I happen to turn out of mid-Holborn southward and find myself in Little Queen-street. There, at No. 7, Lamb, in 1795—three years after he had entered the India House—lived with his father, a good old retired clerk from the Temple; his mother, who was almost bedridden; and his unfortunate sister Mary. Lamb used to come home early to Little Queen-street, and spend his evenings playing at cribbage with

his old father, now on the verge of dotage. His sister, whose brain was painfully active, was nearly worn out with the needle-work by which she helped the struggling family, and the day-and-night attendance on the crippled mother. Lamb, just twenty, was in love with a fair maiden of Islington, and wrote old-fashioned sonnets to this girl, several of which Mr. Serjeant Talfourd has preserved. The prettiest of them is the following:

A timid grace sits trembling in her eye,
As loth to meet the rudeness of men's sight;
Yet shedding a delicious lunar light,
That steepes in kind oblivion's ecstasy
The care-crazed mind like some still melody;
Speaking most plain, the thoughts which do possess
Her gentle sprite, peace and meek quietness,
And innocent loves and maiden purity,
A look whereof might heal the cruel smart
Of changed friends; or Fortune's wrongs unkind;
Turned are those lights from me, who fondly yet
Past joys, vain loves, and buried hopes regret.

At this time Coleridge was about to incorporate in a book some of Lamb's poems with his own.

On this April-life of sunshine and sorrow, however, a thunderbolt of misery suddenly fell. On Thursday, 22nd of September, 1796, as the family were preparing for their humble dinner, Mary Lamb, who had been "queer" for several days, suddenly seized a case-knife that lay on the table, and began to chase a little girl, her apprentice in dress-making, round the room. On Mrs. Lamb calling to Mary to forbear, she turned on her mother and stabbed her to the heart. The child's cries soon brought assistance, and Charles himself found his sister standing with the knife, still wet, over his dead mother; the old man was weeping by his dead wife's side, and bleeding at the forehead from the blow of a fork thrown by his maddened daughter.

Lamb loved his sister, and this event struck him to the heart. He wrote a letter to his friend Coleridge, describing the terrible scene, and a tear lies in every word. Coleridge had written him an immediate letter of consolation. Lamb's reply is written to thank him. It commences:—

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,—Your letter was an inestimable treasure to me. My poor, ever-dearest sister, the unhappy and unconscious instrument of the Almighty's judgment on our house, is restored to her senses and to a dreadful sense and recollection of what has past, awful to her mind and impressive (as it must be to the end of life), yet tempered with religious resignation and the reasonings of a sound

judgment, which, in this early stage, knows how to distinguish between a deed committed in a transient fit of frenzy, and the terrible guilt of a mother's murder. I have seen her, and I found her this morning calm and serene—far, very far, from an indecent, forgetful serenity; and she has a most affectionate and tender concern for what has happened."

Lamb then goes on to describe a scene on the second day after the murder, when a party of twenty sympathising friends were at supper. He had sat down with them, when a sudden pang of grief for his poor dead mother, lying in the next room, impelled him, in indignation and tears, to go and throw himself on his knees beside her coffin and ask "forgiveness of Heaven and of her for forgetting her so soon." "The good lady of the madhouse" and her daughter, "an elegant, sweet-behaved young lady," love Mary, writes Lamb, "and are taken with her amazingly." Then he hints at other troubles; his brother John is prosperous and selfish, offers no help with the old father, and keeps saying, in a comfortable way, "Charles, you must take care of yourself, and must not abridge a single pleasure, and so on." Then there is an old aunt, of whom a wealthy relation gets tired, and who has to be also nursed by Mary, which brings on another fit of insanity. This was the good old aunt who used to come to Christ's Hospital, and rather hurt Lamb's pride by sitting down on the old coal-cellar steps, as you went into the old grammar school, and there open her tied-up apron and bring out a basin with some nice thing she had saved for the dear boy.

There can be no doubt that at this time Lamb made a vow never to marry while his sister lived and required his sheltering care. Once only, in 1800, when an old servant died, and Mary went back to the asylum sooner than usual, his courage and patience for a moment gave way, and he writes to a friend, "My heart is quite sick, and I don't know where to look for relief. My head is very bad; I almost wish that Mary were dead."

Once more only was Lamb in love. While at Pentonville he formed a Platonic attachment with a young Quaker girl, to whom, however, he never spoke. To her memory he wrote those beautiful lines beginning—

My sprightly neighbour gone before
To that unknown and silent shore,
Shall we not meet as heretofore
Some summer morning?

Lamb's letters display all his likings, prejudices, and peculiarities, his love for old books and old friends, his relish for bookstalls, his delight in old London nooks, and his tendency to pun. Now and then he would plan an elaborate hoax for an old friend and enjoy its result with the utmost gusto. The following letter to H. C. Robinson is a good instance of this practice, and, as one reads it, one imagines the dry smile stealing over the face of this quaint, amiable writer:—

"April 10th, 1829.

"DEAR ROBINSON,—We are afraid you will slip from us and from England without again seeing us. It would be charity to come and see me. I have these three days been laid up with strong rheumatic pains in loins, back, shoulders. I shriek sometimes from the violence of them. I get scarce any sleep, and the consequence is I am restless, and want to change sides as I lie, and I cannot turn without resting on my hands, and so turning all my body all at once, like a log with a lever. While this rainy weather lasts I have no hope of alleviation. I have tried flannels and embrocation in vain. Just at the hip-joint the pangs are sometimes so excruciating that I cry out. It is as violent as the cramp, and far more continuous. I am ashamed to whine about these complaints to you, who can ill enter into them; but indeed they are sharp. You go about, in rain or fine, at all hours, without discomfort. I envy you your immunity at a time of life not much removed from my own. But you owe your exemption to temperance, which it is too late for me to pursue. I, in my lifetime, have had my good things; hence my frame is brittle, yours strong as brass. I never knew any ailment you had. You can go out at night in all weathers, sit up all hours. Well, I don't want to moralise; I only wish to say that, if you are inclined to a game of double-dumby, I would try to bolster up myself in a chair for a rubber or so. My days are tedious, but less so, and less painful, than my nights. May you never know the pain and difficulty I have in writing so much! Mary, who is most kind, joins in the wish! C. LAMB."

Then comes the clearing-up letter a week later:—

"April 17th, 1829.

"I do confess to mischief. It was the subtlest diabolical piece of malice heart of man has contrived. I have no more rheumatism than that poker. Never was freer

from all pains and aches. Every joint sound, to the tip of the ear from the extremity of the lesser toe. The report of thy torments was blown circuitously here from Bury. I could not resist the jeer. I conceived you writhing when you should just receive my congratulations. How mad you'd be. Well, it is not in my method to inflict pangs. I leave that to Heaven. But in the existing pangs of a friend I have a share. His disquietude crowns my exemption. I imagine you howling; and I pace across the room shooting out my free arms, legs, &c., *S A I*, this way and that way, with an assurance of not kindling a spark of pain from them. I deny that nature meant us to sympathise with agonies. Those free contortions, retortions, extortions have the merriness of antics. Nature meant them for farce—not so pleasant to the actor, indeed; but Grimaldi cries when we laugh, and it is but one that suffers to make thousands rejoice.

"You say that shampooing is ineffectual. But, per se, it is good to show the introvolutions, extra-volutions, of which the animal frame is capable, to show what the creature is susceptible of, short of dissolution.

"You are worst of nights, ain't you? You never was racked, was you? I should like an authentic map of those feelings.

"You seem to have the flying gout. You can scarcely screw a smile out of your face, can you? I sit at immunity, and sneer ad libitum. 'Tis now the time for you to make good resolutions. I may go on breaking 'em, for anything the worse I find myself. Your doctor seems to keep you on the long cure. Precipitate healings are never good. Don't come while you are so bad. I shan't be able to attend to your throes and the dummy at once. I should like to know how slowly the pain goes off. But don't, write, unless the motion will be likely to make your sensibility more exquisite.—Your affectionate and truly healthy friend, C. LAMB.

"Mary thought a letter from me might amuse you in your torment."

How full of fun this letter is, with its pretended triumph over his friend! He seems to taste the humour of every word, as a child lingers over a sweetmeat.

The following letter to Mrs. Hazlitt relates one of the most humorous scenes of Lamb's life. George Dyer, who edited the interminable *Delphin Classics*, had been to call on the Lambs at their home in Cole-

brook-row, and in broad noon had left the house, and in a fit of poetic abstraction walked plump into the New River. Now Dyer was an absent man, and had been known to put snuff into the tea-pot in mistake for tea; but walking into the New River in broad daylight was worthy of Sir Isaac Newton:—

"1823.

"DEAR MRS. H.,—Sitting down to write a letter is such a painful operation to Mary that you must accept me as her proxy. You have seen our house. What I now tell you is literally true. Yesterday week George Dyer called upon us at one o'clock (bright noon-day), on his way to dine with Mrs. Barbauld, at Newington, and he sat with Mary about half an hour. The maid saw him go out, from her kitchen window, but, suddenly losing sight of him, ran up in a fright to Mary. G. D., instead of keeping the slip that leads to the gate, had deliberately, staff in hand, in broad open day, marched into the New River. He had not his spectacles on, and you know his absence. Who helped him out they can hardly tell, but between 'em they got him out drenched through and through. A mob collected by that time and accompanied him in. 'Send for the doctor!' they said; and a one-eyed fellow, dirty and drunk, was fetched from a public-house at the end, where, it seems, he lurks, for the sake of picking up water practice, having formerly had a medal from the Humane Society for some rescue. By his advice the patient was put between blankets; and, when I came home to dinner, I found G. D. a-bed, raving, light-headed, with the brandy-and-water which the doctor had administered. He sung, laughed, whimpered, screamed, babbled of guardian angels, would get up and go home; but we kept him there by force; and by next morning he departed, sobered, and seems to have received no injury. All my friends are open-mouthed about having palings before the river; but I cannot see, because an absent man chooses to walk into a river, with his eyes open at mid-day, I am the more likely to be drowned in it coming home at midnight.

"I have had the honour of dining at the Mansion-house on Thursday last, by special card from the Lord Mayor, who never saw my face, nor I his; and all from being a writer in a magazine! The dinner costly, served on massy plate, champagne, pines, &c.; forty-seven present, among whom the chairman and two

other directors of the India Company. There's for you! and got away pretty sober! Quite saved my credit.

"We continue to like our home prodigiously. Our kind remembrances to all.—Yours truly, C. LAMB."

The next letter from which we extract contains a wonderful little etching of Hazlitt. He is represented at a morning call, sitting in dark silence, with his hat by the side of his chair, and after a purgatorial ten minutes, abruptly rising, shaking hands, and departing:—

"Mary is just stuck fast in 'All's well that ends well.' She complains of having to set forth so many female characters in boy's clothes. She begins to think Shakespeare must have wanted—Imagination. I, to encourage her, for she often faints in the prosecution of her great work, flatter her with telling her how well such a play and such a play is done. But she is stuck fast. I have been obliged to promise to assist her. To do this, it will be necessary to leave off tobacco. But I had some thoughts of doing that before, for I sometimes think it does not agree with me. Mr. Hazlitt is in town. I took him to see a very pretty girl professedly where there were two young girls—the very head and sum of the girlery were two young girls. They neither laughed, nor sneered, nor giggled, nor whispered—but they were young girls—and he sat and frowned blacker and blacker, indignant that there should be such a thing as youth and beauty, till he tore me away before supper in perfect misery, and owned he could not bear young girls; they drove him mad. So I took him to my old nurse, where he recovered perfect tranquillity. Independent of this, and as I am not a young girl myself, he is a great acquisition to us. He is, rather imprudently I think, printing a political pamphlet on his own account, and will have to pay for the paper, &c. The first duty of an author, I take it, is never to pay anything. But, Non cuivis contigit adire Corinthum. The managers, thank my stars, have settled that question for me.—Yours truly, C. LAMB."

In the next letter in our bouquet, Lamb tells his friend Manning, for whose intellectual qualities he had a great respect, his intention of moving house, and expatiates on the variety, splendour, and glories of London, being one of the first of our writers who saw the true poetry of the old city. With what gusto and humorous affection he catalogues the delights of the modern Babel!

"I am going to change my lodgings, having received a hint that it would be agreeable, at Our Lady's next feast. I have partly fixed upon most delectable rooms, which look out (when you stand a tip-toe) over the Thames and Surrey-hills; at the upper end of King's Bench-walk, in the Temple. There I shall have all the privacy of a house without the encumbrance, and shall be able to lock my friends out as often as I desire to hold free converse with my immortal mind; for my present lodgings resemble a minister's levee, I have so increased my acquaintance (as they call 'em) since I have resided in town. Like the country mouse that had tasted a little of urban manners, I long to be nibbling my own cheese by my dear self, without mouse-traps and time-traps. By my new plan I shall be as airy, up four pair of stairs, as in the country; and in a garden, in the midst of enchanting (more than Mahomedan Paradise) London, whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest-bowing tradesman, I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter, and the parson into the bargain. O her lamps of a night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardware-men, pastry-cooks, St. Paul's-churchyard, the Strand, Exeter-change, Charing-cross, with the man upon a black horse! These are thy gods, O London! Ain't you mightily moped on the banks of the Cam? Had you not better come and set up here? You can't think what a difference. All the streets and pavements are pure gold, I warrant you. At least, I know an alchemy that turns her mud into that metal—a mind that loves to be at home in crowds.

"'Tis half-past twelve o'clock, and all sober people ought to be a-bed. Between you and me, the L. ballads are but drowsy performances. C. LAMB (as you may guess)."

Here is a letter written to Manning in high spirits. It contains another touch of the character of that confused old Dominie Sampson, George Dyer. He had been calling on Lamb with an old doctor who tied his knee-breeches with pack-thread, and boasted that he had received mortifications from prime ministers:—

"The doctor wanted to see me; for I being a poet, he thought I might furnish him with a copy of verses to suit his Agricultural Magazine. The doctor, in the course of the conversation, mentioned a poem called the 'Epigoniad,' by one Wilkie, an epic poem, in which there is not one tolerable good line all through,

but every incident and speech borrowed from Homer. George had been sitting inattentive, seemingly, to what was going on—hatching of negative quantities—when, suddenly, the name of his old friend Homer stung his pericranicks, and, jumping up, he begged to know where he could meet with Wilkie's works. It was a curious fact, he said, that there should be such an epic poem and he not know of it, and he must get a copy of it, as he was going to touch pretty deeply upon the subject of the Epic, and he was sure there must be some good things in a poem of eight thousand lines."

The letter to Manning, which follows, expresses, with all Lamb's quaint and playful humour, the troubles and vexations of moving house. One can fancy the lumber and litter of Lamb's chambers, with the old pipes, old prints, and old books. Lamb was an old bachelor, living with an invalid sister, and had always lived a careless, cozy sort of life. A great part of Lamb's pleasant mannerism, from childhood, was associated with the Temple:—

"... Don't come any more to Mitre-court-buildings. We are at 34, Southamp-ton-buildings, Chancery-lane, and shall be here till about the end of May; then we remove to 4, Inner Temple-lane, where I mean to live and die, for I have such a horror of moving that I would not take a benefice from the king, if I was not indulged with non-residence. What a dislocation of comfort is comprised in that word 'moving!' Such a heap of little nasty things, after you think all is got into the cart: old dredging-boxes, worn-out brushes, gallipots, vials—things that it is impossible the most necessitous person can ever want, but which the women, who preside on these occasions, will not leave behind, if it was to save your soul! They'd keep the cart ten minutes to stow in dirty pipes and broken matches, to show their economy. Then you can find nothing you want for many days after you get into your new lodgings. You must comb your hair with your fingers, wash your hands without soap, go about in dirty gaiters. Were I Diogenes, I would not move out of a kilderkin into a hogshead, though the first had had nothing but small beer in it and the second reeked claret. Our place of final destination—I don't mean the grave, but No. 4, Inner Temple-lane—looks out upon a gloomy, churchyard-like court, called Hare-court, with three trees and a pump in it. Do you know it? I was born

near it, and used to drink at that pump when I was a Rechabite of six years old."

And now we turn to another great humorist, whose laughter was also blended with tears. Tom Hood, like Lamb, laughed that he might not weep. Though he had not a great domineering sorrow brooding ever at his heart, like Lamb, he was a man whose life was one long illness, and, when he was not staying off Death, he was struggling with poverty. No English writer was, perhaps, more essentially a humorist, and he could no more help his ceaseless puns than an electric machine can help its sparks. His quick brain as unconsciously delivered itself of these analogies and verbal distortions, as a squib discharges itself of fire. The very sound of a word suggested some fresh, strange shape into which it could be twisted, and which had been latent within it; and by the side of this sparkling yet almost mechanical fun lay the power of touching the heart and calling forth tears; for in that weak, drudging invalid there was stored a powerful love for humanity, and a pity, almost saint-like, for its sorrows and its temptations. His puns were sweetmeats for everybody's dish; but when he sang *The Song of the Shirt*, and *The Bridge of Sighs*, he moved the very soul of England. This delightful poet and punster was the son of a Scotch bookseller in the Poultry, who published the poems of Kirke White and Bloomfield. Tom Hood was, as a boy, apprenticed to an engraver, and there acquired the power of drawing grotesques, that he afterwards employed in his comic annuals. From a child he showed a relish for fun and a power of playful versifying; and at about twenty-one became sub-editor of the *London Magazine*, for Messrs. Taylor and Hussey. He seems to have been intimate with Charles Lamb soon after his marriage; and in 1826 appeared the first series of the delightful *Whims and Oddities*, the fun and frolic of the leisure moments of a thoughtful and sensitive man. The following letter to a child exhibits Hood's style of fun very well, and shows us him in one of his most playful moments:—

"Devonshire Lodge, New Finchley-road,

"St. John's-wood,

"July 1st (first of Hebrew falsity).

"MY DEAR DUNNIE,—I have heard of your doings at Sandgate, and that you were so happy at getting to the sea that you were obliged to be flogged a little to moderate it and keep some for next day. I am very fond of the sea, too, though I have been

twice nearly drowned by it; once in a storm in a ship, and once under a boat's bottom when I was bathing. Of course you have bathed, but have you learned to swim yet? It is rather easy in salt water, and diving is still easier, even, than at the sink. I only swim in fancy and strike out new ideas!

"Is not the tide curious? Though I cannot say much for its tidiness; it makes such a slop and litter on the beach. It comes and goes as regularly as the boys of a proprietary school, but has no holidays. And what a rattle the waves make with the stones when they are rough; you will find some rolled into decent marbles and bounces; and sometimes you may hear the sound of a heavy sea, at a distance, like a giant snoring. Some people say that every ninth wave is bigger than the rest. I have often counted, but never found it come true, except with tailors, of whom every ninth is a man. But in rough weather there are giant waves bigger than the rest, that come in trios, from which, I suppose, Britannia rules the waves by the rule of three. When I was a boy I loved to play with the sea, in spite of its sometimes getting rather rough. I and my brothers chucked hundreds of stones into it, as you do; but we came away before we could fill it up. In those days we were at war with France. Unluckily it is peace now, or with so many stones you might have good fun for days in pelting the enemy's coast. Once I almost thought I nearly hit Boney! Then there was looking for an island like Robinson Crusoe! Have you ever found one yet, surrounded by water? I remember once staying on the beach, when the tide was flowing, till I was a peninsula, and only by running turned myself into a continent.

"Then there is fishing at the seaside. I used to catch flat-fish with a very long string line. It was like swimming a kite! But perhaps there are no flat-fish at Sandgate except your shoe-soles. The best plan, if you want flat-fish where there are none, is to bring codlings and hammer them into dabs. Once I caught a plaice, and, seeing it all over red spots, I thought I had caught the measles.

"Do you ever long, when you are looking at the sea, for a voyage? If I were off Sandgate with my yacht (only she is not yet built), I would give you a cruise in her. In the meantime you can practice sailing in any little boat you can get. But mind that it does not flounder or get

squamped, as some people say instead of 'founder' and 'swamp.' I have been swamped myself by Malaria, and almost floundered, which reminds me that Tom Junior, being very ingenious, has made a cork model of a diving-bell that won't sink.

"By this time, I suppose, you are become, instead of a land-boy, a regular sea-urchin; and so amphibious that you can walk on the land as well as on the water—or better. And don't you mean, when you grow up, to go to sea? Should you not like to be a little midshipman? or half a quartermaster, with a cocked hat and a dirk, that will be a sword by the time you are a man? If you do resolve to be a post-captain, let me know; and I will endeavour, through my interest with the Commissioners of Pavements, to get you a post to jump over of the proper height. Tom is just rigging a boat, so I suppose that he inclines to be an Admiral of the Marines. But before you decide, remember the port-holes, and that there are great guns in those battle-doors that will blow you into shuttlecocks, which is a worse game than whoop and hide—as to a good hiding!

"And so farewell, young 'Old Fellow,' and take care of yourself so near the sea, for in some places, they say, it has not even a bottom to go to if you fall in. And remember when you are bathing, if you meet with a shark, the best way is to bite off his legs, if you can, before he walks off with you. And so, hoping that you will be better soon, for somebody told me you had the shingles, I am, my dear Dannie, your affectionate friend,

THOMAS HOOD.

"P.S. I have heard that at Sandgate there used to be lobsters; but some ignorant fairy turned them all by her spell into bolsters."

AN EPISODE OF THE ITALIAN REVOLUTION.

In 1861 all Italy, from the Alps to Sicily, was agitated by violent reactionary movements in favour of Francis the Second. Secret agencies had long been at work scattering the seeds of discord far and wide; but it was not till the revolution had fairly commenced that the widespread character of the disaffection became evident. In no quarter, however, was the pernicious influence of the rebellion more clearly seen, or afterwards more severely felt, than among the brigands.

The brigands had hitherto existed only in scattered bands, whose numbers rarely, if ever, exceeded some thirty or forty men, and these, too, never ventured far into the

plains, but confined their operations within very narrow limits. But in 1861 all this was changed, for brigandage then assumed a truly gigantic aspect.

The adherents of the dethroned king saw in brigandage a means of obtaining the restoration of their hero, and many, accordingly, cast in their lot with the outlaws; while others were impelled by the hopes of gain, or by the expectation of ultimate power in the new state. The greatest reinforcements were, however, obtained from the prisons, which, from the lax guard maintained over them, afforded to enterprising criminals an easy means of escape. But, whatever the ultimate end each of these several classes proposed to itself might be, the primary motive was plunder, and this they were not slow in testifying. Sallying forth unexpectedly from the secluded depths of the pine-forests of the Apennines, they swept down like a torrent over the peaceful plains beneath, carrying destruction and ruin in their train. Gradually they extended their field of operations, and, encouraged by their rapidly increasing numbers, did not hesitate to attack the hamlets, and even to meditate an assault on some of the towns. Such was the state of matters at the period of which we write.

Of all the provinces of Italy, Basilicata had ever been, more than any other, a home for the brigand. From its mountain fastnesses and forest depths he could carry fierce and sudden destruction into the plain beneath; and in these refuges, too, he could, when hard beset, bid defiance to pursuit. But though, as we have already said, it had always been more or less infested by brigands, it now appeared to have suddenly become a general rendezvous for them. They established themselves in positions of great strength on the heights of Melfi, from which they levied blackmail on the surrounding district.

The leader of this concentrated band of ruffians was the notorious Carmine Donatelli, better known by his surname of Crocco. He was an escaped convict, a villain of the deepest dye, and one who would not scruple to do anything if it but served his purpose for the time.

To his daring mind the operations as hitherto conducted were far too tame and profitless, and nothing would satisfy his ardent longings save an attack on one of the towns of the province.

The first of these on which his eye fell was Venosa, a town of no great importance either in size or commerce, but which pos-

sesses a historical interest from its having been the birthplace of the Roman poet Horace. The inhabitants, warned of their danger, set about making preparations for the defence of the town. The National Guards, who were posted in the neighbouring hamlets, were recalled, and every available means of defence was put in requisition. Barricades were erected in the streets leading to the gates of the town, and the outer wall was strengthened as far as could possibly be done in such a short space of time.

For some days it seemed as if the report of the intended attack by the brigands had been but an idle rumour, for there was no appearance of them, nor any news of their approach; and the inhabitants were beginning to be lulled into a state of fancied security. From this they were destined, however, to be speedily and terribly aroused.

On the morning of the 10th of April, a party of the National Guard had proceeded some little distance from the town for the purpose of reconnoitring, when they were met by a crowd of peasants, laden with their household gear, and hurrying with all possible speed towards Venosa. On being interrogated by the troops, they informed them that they were betaking themselves to the shelter of the town, as the brigands, laying the country waste in their progress, were rapidly approaching Venosa. Their tale was soon more than confirmed by other parties bound on the same errand; and the Guards, considering it would be more prudent to retire than risk the chances of a conflict with superior numbers, made the best of their way back to the town, and prepared to make their position as secure as possible.

The dreaded foe at length appeared—a motley crew about five hundred in number. Had it been possible to eliminate from one's mind the thought of the brutal cruelties these brigands practised, one might have looked with admiration on the picturesque spectacle, as they debouched from the shelter of the wood that fringed the road to Venosa, and deployed along its margin to the position their leader had chosen as his basis of operations.

In such a crowd, so numerous and composed of such heterogeneous elements, it might have appeared almost absurd to look for discipline; but perfect discipline there was, for, whatever his other qualities might be, Crocco most undoubtedly was “a ruler of men.” His word in that band was law, and the punishment of disaffection was death.

Firm to the trust reposed in them, the National Guards planted themselves at every possible approach, and determined to hold their own against all odds.

Burning for the onset, the brigands urged Crocco to lead them on to the assault, a demand to which their leader readily acceded. With a wild shout they darted on towards the barriers, expecting to carry them at the first onset; but they had in this reckoned without their host, for on coming within range, they were met by a sharp volley from the rifles of the National Guard, which threw their ranks into disorder, and compelled them for the moment to retire.

Crocco seeing that his men were likely to suffer very severely by a headlong assault upon the town, was hesitating whether he should abandon his attempt or wait the issue of events, when one of his scouts brought intelligence to him that a white flag, evidently a signal from friends inside the town, was being displayed from an embrasure on the east side. Reassured by this, Crocco, detaching a strong party of the brigands from the main body, made a detour through the woods and approached the place where the signal was being displayed. So far from resistance being offered, ladders were lowered down to them from the walls, so that their entrance was greatly facilitated.

Once inside the town, their task was a comparatively easy one. Surprised and betrayed, the National Guard were almost entirely at the mercy of the brigands. Even yet, notwithstanding overwhelming odds, they might have retrieved the fortune of the day, but the citizens, fearing lest a vigorous resistance might exasperate the brigands, and, in the event of failure on their part, might cause them to lay the town in ruins, interposed, and, with tears in their eyes, besought the soldiers to desist, and leave them to their fate. Thus cast aside, as it were, the National Guard had no resource left but to retire to the castle, and there endeavour to defend themselves against the fate which the townspeople seemed so ready to embrace.

Crocco then admitted the rest of his band into the town without opposition, and immediately gave orders to his men to plunder. No second command was needed, and the ruffian band swept down on the defenceless town like a whirlwind.

It would only harrow the reader's mind were the dreadful scenes that ensued depicted in all their horrors; but we shall present one scene whose dread details are,

notwithstanding the lapse of years, as vividly impressed on the writer's mind as if they had been occurrences of yesterday. For obvious reasons the names of the dramatic personæ must be fictitious.

In one of the largest squares in the town stood the house of the canon, La Casca. He had rendered himself particularly obnoxious to the party of Francis the Second by the strenuous support he had all along given to the cause of Victor Emmanuel, and because he had endeavoured by rigorous measures to quell the reactionary outbreaks within his district. Towards his house, therefore, the brigands made their way, actuated alike by the hopes of plunder and the still more powerful thirst for revenge, for Crocco's band had suffered more than any other from the stringent measures of the canon.

Besides his servants, there were with him at this time in the house his only son, Giacomo, a young man of twenty-five; his daughter Marguerite; and her intended husband, Giuseppe Spina, a young man in the full vigour of health and strength.

On the entrance of the brigands into the town, the canon, foreseeing the probable issue of events, resolved on defending himself to the last, and accordingly took full advantage of the short time that elapsed before the arrival of the brigands in the square. All the windows were barricaded and the doors securely fastened; and to protect the inmates still further, and intercept as much as possible the flight of any stray bullet that might find its way in, all the available movables that could be collected were piled behind the windows.

They had not completed their preparations, however, when fierce shouts and imprecations, and a shower of bullets against the gate, gave warning to the inmates of the arrival of the foe. To the demand of the brigands that they should surrender, the canon and his comrades replied by a volley from the loopholes on either side of the doorway; and, surrounded as the doorway was by a dense crowd, each shot sped on its deadly errand with fatal effect. Undeterred, however, by the fall of their comrades, the brigands renewed their aggressive movements, and, having obtained a large plank from a neighbouring erection, advanced once more to the doorway, and began to batter it in an endeavour to effect an entrance. Shot after shot sped amongst them and thinned their ranks, but, though the flagstones were heaped with dead and slippery with blood, the ruffians pursued their work with unabated vigour.

At length, under the unceasing shower of blows, the door gave way, carrying with it in its fall the side-posts and the adhering masonry. Amid the crash and dust of the falling timbers, the brigands clambered over their dead comrades, and with demoniac shouts rushed into the devoted dwelling.

Fierce and desperate was the contest that ensued. In the entrance a dreadful hand-to-hand conflict took place, and the combatants were now too closely intermingled to admit of a shot being fired without endangering friends as well as foes. The struggle was fierce and long; but what could strength and skill avail against such overwhelming odds? With diminished numbers, but with unabated courage, the heroic canon and his brave followers were compelled to retreat before their foes, each step being gallantly disputed. From room to room were they driven, until, after retreating up the staircase, they gained a front room overlooking the street, where they had determined to make a last stand.

As the party crossed the threshold, the gallant canon received a shot full in the forehead, and, without a groan, sank lifeless to the ground. Over his prostrate form the assailants pressed into the room, where stood at bay the three survivors of the conflict—the canon's son, Marguerite, and Giuseppe Spina.

The first of these was faint and weak from loss of blood, which was gushing from a gaping wound in his right wrist. Giuseppe, on the other hand, though he had received several wounds, was as yet comparatively fresh, and still plied his deadly weapon with as fatal effect as ever.

In two at least of the three that stood there, the prospect of their inevitable doom did not create a single pang. As they gazed round that circle of inhuman foes, on whose countenances not a tinge of pity could be discerned, their souls scorned the idea of a submission to which even death itself appeared preferable.

For a moment there was a dead silence, broken at last by one of the brigands, who fired his pistol, and then rushed with a fierce shout upon the party with his sword. This was the signal for a general *mêlée*. The brigands rushed in a body on the gallant party, and, though Giuseppe cleared a circle around them by the force of his dreaded arm, and thus kept the foe at bay, yet, when they retired from the first fierce onslaught, poor Giacomo lay weltering in his blood.

And now came the last deadly struggle. Alone, but undaunted, and undismayed

by overwhelming odds, the heroic Spina fought like a lion for the woman he loved. And though Marguerite's cheek blanched, and her pale lip quivered when first her parent and then her brother fell victims to the fury of the brigands, yet she did not otherwise betray her emotion; and when one of the brigands, thinking in the heat of the contest to take Spina unawares and stab him from the rear, was watching for an opportunity to accomplish his design, Marguerite, snatching a pistol from the body of the prostrate Giacomo, shot the villain through the heart.

So struck were the brigands with their undaunted courage, that some of them offered to spare their lives if they would surrender. For the sake of his betrothed, Spina would have condescended, even then, to parley with them; but all hope of a peaceful termination to the struggle was suddenly destroyed, for, at this juncture, there was a commotion, the crowd parted, and to the front pressed the burly form of Vincenzo Nardi, the lieutenant of Crocco. He was a man of admirable build and splendid proportions, but his sinister features destroyed all prepossession that might have been created by his magnificent figure. No sooner had Giuseppe's eyes fallen on Nardi than he recognised in him the murderer of his father, whose life he had taken away at Civita Vecchia the previous year, on account of some fancied wrong.

Not a thought of peace lingered in his mind, but with unbridled fury he rushed on Nardi. Both were brilliant swordsmen, but, taken off his guard by the suddenness of the onset, Nardi received a severe flesh wound in the sword arm. With less of vigour but more of rage he fought on. For a short time nothing was seen but the quick flashes of the steel, as the combatants cut, thrust, and parried. Not a sound broke from either as with compressed lips and flashing eyes they exerted themselves in the stern struggle for life.

The other brigands, as if by mutual consent, stood aloof, and breathlessly watched the issue. Both combatants fought for some time without gaining any apparent advantage, till Spina, making a feint at Nardi's right arm, suddenly changed the direction of the stroke and ran him through the left shoulder. The giant staggered, and it seemed to all as if the blow were fatal, but, with a prodigious effort he recovered himself, and though the blood welled from the wound and dyed his shirt of a ruddier crimson, he still struggled against his fate. But Spina

knew that the struggle could not now last long. Pressing on Nardi and showering his blows with redoubled vigour, he strove to give his opponent the coup de grâce. And now it seemed as if Nardi's fate was sealed, for he was weak from loss of blood, and his opponent's strength seemed to be increasing rather than diminishing by the continuance of the conflict; but at this juncture the latter slipped on the bloody flooring, and ere he could recover his footing, the dagger of Nardi was in his heart.

With a wild shriek Marguerite fell on the bosom of her slain lover. With passionate prayers she strove to conjure up one look of recognition in those impassive features; and when she found that her attempts were vain, and that he was really dead, she rent the air with her cries.

With a brutal imprecation, Vincenzo Nardi tore the shrieking maiden from her lover's bosom, and, with the dagger which was yet reeking with his life-blood, inflicted several hideous gashes on her lovely features. The lady swooned and fell apparently lifeless to the floor, the brutal Nardi exclaiming "You have wounded many a one; it is your turn to be wounded now!"

The other brigands, inured as they were to every species of crime, and hardened as they were by a long course of villainy, could not suppress a murmur of horror at the brutal deed, but Nardi, coolly wiping the gory dagger on his buskins, ordered the band to leave the dwelling and its inmates to their fate.

Despite her dreadful wounds, Marguerite survived, and entered a convent in Naples, where she probably seeks, by the aid of religious meditation, to drown the dreadful current of thoughts that must flood her brain at times. Nardi died of his wounds at Venosa that same evening.

A CHARMING FELLOW.

BY FRANCES ELEANOR TROLLOPE.

AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE," "MABEL'S PROGRESS," &c. &c.

CHAPTER L.

STIFF, tired, and cold, Algernon alighted the next morning at the coach-office in London, after his night journey. He drove to a fashionable hotel not very far from Lord Seely's house, and refreshed himself with a warm bath and a luxurious breakfast. By the time that was done it was eleven o'clock in the forenoon. He had been considering how best to proceed, in a leisurely way, during his breakfast, and had decided to go to Lord Seely's house

without further delay. He knew Lady Seely's habits well enough to feel tolerably sure that she would not be out of her bed before eleven o'clock, nor out of her room before mid-day. He thought that he might gain access to his lordship by a coup de main, if he so timed his visit as to avoid encountering my lady. So he had himself driven to within a few yards of the house, and walked up to the well-known door. It was a different arrival from his first appearance on that threshold. Algernon did not fail to think of the contrast, and he told himself that he had been very badly used by the whole Seely family: they had done so infinitely less for him than he had expected! The sense of injury awakened by this reflection was as supporting to him as a cordial.

The servant who opened the door, and who at once recognised Algernon, stared in surprise on seeing him, but was too well trained to express emotion in any other way. After a few inquiries about Lord Seely's health, Algernon asked if he could be allowed to see his lordship. This, however, was a difficult matter. My lord was better, certainly, the footman said, but my lady had given strict orders that he was not to be disturbed. No one was admitted to his room except the doctor, who would not make his visit until late in the afternoon.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of disturbing my lady at this hour," said Algernon, "but I must speak with Lord Seely. It is of the very greatest importance."

"I'll call Mr. Briggs, sir," the footman was beginning, when Algernon stopped him. Mr. Briggs was Lord Seely's own man, and, like all the servants in the house, was certain to obey his mistress's orders rather than his master's, if the two should happen to conflict. Algernon slipped some money into the footman's hand, together with a note which he had written that morning. "There, James," said he; "if you will manage to convey that into his lordship's own hand, I know he will see me. And, moreover, he would be seriously annoyed, if I were sent away without having spoken to him on business of very great importance."

James reflected that the worst that could happen to him would be a scolding from my lady. That was certainly no trifling evil; but he decided to risk it, being moved to do so not only by the bribe, but by a real liking for young Errington, who was generally a favourite with other people's servants.

The note which James carried upstairs was as follows:—

"MY LORD,—I write in the driest and most matter-of-fact terms I can find, to ask for an interview with your lordship with the least possible delay, being unwilling to make, or to appear to make, any claim on the regard you once professed for me, or on the connection which unites us, and desiring you to understand that I appeal to you on behalf of another person; and that, were it not for that other person, I should ask no more favours of your lordship—nor, perhaps, need any. A. ANCRAM ERRINGTON."

In a few moments James came running downstairs and begged Algernon, almost in a whisper, to walk up to his lordship's room.

Lord Seely was not in bed. He was reclining in an easy-chair, with one foot and leg supported on cushions. He seemed ill and worn, but his dark eyes sparkled as he looked eagerly at Algernon, who entered quietly and closed the door behind him. "What is it? I'm afraid you have bad news, Ancram," said Lord Seely, holding out his hand.

Algernon did not take it. He bowed very gravely, and stood opposite to the little nobleman.

"Castalia——!" cried Lord Seely, much dismayed by the young man's manner. "Don't keep me in suspense, for God's sake! Is she ill? Is she dead?"

"No, my lord. Castalia is not dead. Neither, so far as I know, is she ill—in body."

"What is the matter?"

"I must crave a patient hearing, my lord. I regret to have to trouble you whilst you are ill and suffering, but what I have to say must be said without delay. May I ask if there is any one within hearing?"

"No! No one. You can close the door of that dressing-closet if you choose. But there is no one there."

Algernon adopted the suggestion at once, and then sat down opposite to Lord Seely's chair. His whole manner of proceeding was so unusual and unexpected, that it produced a very painful impression on Lord Seely. Algernon rather enjoyed this. He began to speak with only one distinct purpose in his mind: namely, to frighten his wife's uncle into making a strong effort to help him out of Whitford. How much pressure would be necessary to achieve that purpose he could not yet tell. And he began to speak with a sort of reckless

abandonment of himself to the guidance of the moment, a mood of mind which had become very frequent with him of late.

"Did your lordship receive a letter from Castalia begging you to obtain a post abroad for me?"

"Certainly. My wife answered it. I—I was unable to write myself. But I intended to reply more at length so soon as I should be better."

"Castalia showed me Lady Seely's reply. That was the first intimation I had of Castalia's having made such an application. I mention this because I know your lordship suspected me of being the prime mover in all her applications to you for assistance."

Lord Seely coloured a little as he replied, "It was natural to suppose that you influenced your wife, Ancram."

"Your lordship must not judge all cases by your own," returned the young man, with a candid raising of his brows; and the colour on Lord Seely's face deepened to a dark red flush, which faded, leaving him paler than before. "As I said," continued Algernon, "I did not know what it was that Castalia had asked you to do for us. But, now that I do know it, I may say at once that I heartily concur with her as to its desirability."

"I cannot agree with you there; but, even if it were so, I assure you it is out of my power—"

"Allow me, my lord! I must tax your patience to listen to what I have to say before you give me any positive answer."

Lord Seely leaned back in his chair, and motioned with his head for Algernon to proceed. The latter went on:

"Exile from England and from all the hopes and ambitions not very unnatural at my age, is not such an alluring prospect that I should be suspected of having incited Castalia to write as she has done. However, I will say no more as to my own private and personal feelings in the matter. I did not mean to allude to them. I beg your pardon." Algernon sat leaning a little forward in his chair. His hands were clasped loosely together, and rested on his knees. He kept his eyes gloomily fixed on the carpet for the most part, and only raised them occasionally to look up at Lord Seely, without raising his head at the same time. "I could not write what I had to say to you, my lord. I dared not write it. Perhaps, even, if I had written, the letter might not have reached you at once; and I could not wish its falling into other hands, so I came away from Whitford last night quite suddenly. I have no leave

of absence; the clerk at the post-office, even, did not know I was coming away."

"Do you mean to say, Ancram, that you have deliberately risked the loss of your situation?"

"My 'situation' was as good as lost already. Do you know what happened yesterday, Lord Seely? I was subjected to the agreeable ordeal of a visit from the surveyor of the postal district in which Whitford is situated. I was catechised magisterially. The whole office—including my private room—was subjected to a sort of scrutiny. There have been a great many letters missing at Whitford lately: some money-letters. That is to say, letters which should have passed through our office have never reached their destination. Nothing has been traced. Nothing is known with certainty. But the concurrence of various circumstances points to Whitford as the place where the letters have been—stolen. I am told on all hands that such things never happened in Mr. Cooper's time—Mr. Cooper was my predecessor as postmaster. I am scowled at, and almost openly insulted in the streets, by a miller, or a baker, or something of the kind, who lives in the neighbourhood. He declares he has lost a considerable sum of money by the post, and plainly considers me responsible. You may guess how pleasant my 'situation' has become in consequence of these things being known and talked about."

"But, good Heavens, Ancram——! I don't comprehend your way of looking at the matter. These irregularities are doubtless very distressing, but surely your rational course would be to use every effort to discover the cause of them and set matters right; not run away, as if you were a culprit!"

"Your lordship judges without knowing all the facts."

"Pardon me, Ancram, but no facts can justify such rash behaviour. I have some experience of men and of the world, and I give you my deliberate opinion that you have acted very indiscreetly, to say the least. I am disappointed in you, Ancram. I regret to say it, but I am disappointed in you. You have shown a want of steadiness, and—and—almost of common sense! The more I think of it, the more I disapprove of the step you have taken. It shows a great want of consideration for others; for your wife. If you were alone it might be pardonable—although excessively ill-judged—to throw up your post at the first experience of the rough side of

things. We all have difficulties to contend with. The most exalted position is not secure from them, as, indeed, it would appear almost superfluous to point out! The record of my own—my own—official life might supply you with more than one example of the value of steadfast energy, and an inflexible determination to conquer antagonistic circumstances."

Poor Lord Seely! He had been subdued by sickness more completely under the dominion of his wife than could ever be the case when he was able to move about, to get away from her, and to converse with persons who were not entirely devoid of any semblance of respect for his opinion. Lady Seely, it might be said, respected nobody—a point of resemblance between herself and her young kinsman which had not led to any very great sympathy or harmony between them; for, as it is your professed joker who can least bear to be laughed at, so those persons who most flippantly ignore any sentiment of reverence towards others are by no means prepared to tolerate a want of deference towards themselves. Certainly, my lady had snubbed her husband during his illness almost unmercifully; she wished him to get better, and she took care that the doctor's orders were faithfully carried out. But her course of treatment was anything but soothing to the spirit, and my lord's pet vanities received no consideration whatever from her. His mind being now relieved from the first shock of apprehension which Algernon's sudden visit had occasioned (for, though things were bad, it was a relief to him to find that Castalia was safe and well), he could not resist the temptation to lecture a little, and be pompous, and display his suppressed self-esteem with a little more emphasis than usual.

Poor Lord Seely! By so doing he unconsciously drew down a terrible catastrophe. It seemed a trivial cause to determine Algernon to speak as he next spoke—as trivial as the heedless foot-fall or too-loudly spoken word which brings the avalanche toppling down from the rock.

"The selfishness and egotism of the man are incredible!" thought Algernon, looking at Lord Seely. "Not one word of sympathy with me! Not a syllable to show that my feelings are worthy of any consideration whatever. Pompous little ass!" Then he said, very gravely and quietly, "I think, my lord, that you have forgotten what I said to you in the hurried

note I sent upstairs, about appealing to you on behalf of another person."

Lord Seely had forgotten it.

"Ha!—no, Ancram. I—I remember what you said; but, I—I take leave to think that if you wish to consider that other person—it is your wife of whom you spoke, I presume?"

Algernon bowed his head.

"If you wish to consider that person effectually, you ought not to have flown off at a tangent in the manner you have done. You might—ahem!—you might, at least, have written to me for advice."

"Lord Seely, I am sorry to say that you are under an entire misapprehension as to the state of the case."

Lord Seely was not accustomed to be told that he was under an entire misapprehension on any subject.

"If so, Ancram," he answered, with some hauteur, "the fault must be yours. I believe I should succeed in comprehending any moderately clear and accurate statement."

"I will try to speak plainly. During the last six weeks I have been made seriously unhappy by rumours floating about in Whitford respecting my wife."

"Rumours—! Respecting your wife?"

"They reach my ears through various channels, and appear to be rife in every social circle in the place."

"Rumours! Of what nature?"

There was a little pause; then Algernon said, "The least terrible of them is, that Castalia's reason is affected, and that she is not responsible for her actions."

Lord Seely started into a more upright posture, and then sank back again with a suppressed cry of pain. Algernon went on, without looking up: "Her manner has been very singular of late. She has taken to wandering about alone, and to make her wanderings as secretly as may be; she haunts the post-office in my absence, carefully informing herself beforehand whether I am in my private room or not; and if I am reported absent, she enters it, searches the drawers, and, I have the strongest reason to believe—indeed I may say I know—that she has tampered with a little cabinet in which I keep a few private papers, and has taken letters out of it!"

"Ancram!"

"These things, my lord, are commonly reported and spoken of by every gossiping tongue in Whitford. I can't help the people talking. Castalia is not liked there; her manners are unpopular, and even the persons who were inclined to receive her

kindly for my sake have been offended and alienated. Still, the things I have told you are facts."

"I am shocked—I am surprised—and, forgive me, Ancram, a little incredulous. You may have listened to malicious tongues; you say that my niece is not liked by the—the class of persons with whom she now associates, and it may be—"

"I am sorry to say, my lord, that Castalia cannot be said to associate with any 'class of persons' in Whitford, for latterly it has become plain to me that all our acquaintances have given her the cold shoulder."

The mingled expression of amazement, incredulity, and offended pride on Lord Seely's face, when Algernon made this announcement, did not operate with the latter as an inducement to spare him. Indeed, he had now gone almost too far to stop short. He held up his hand to deprecate any interruption, and said, "One moment, my lord! I must ask you a question. Have you at any time privately supplied Castalia with money unknown to me?"

"Never! I——"

"Then, Lord Seely, I have only one more circumstance to add. Castalia, the other day, paid a bill of considerable amount to a mercer in Whitford, without my knowledge and without my knowing where she found the money to pay it; and yesterday my clerk, an honest fellow and much attached to me, told me in private and in strict confidence, that it was currently reported in the town that one of the notes paid by my wife to the mercer was endorsed in the same way as a note in one of the missing money-letters I have told you of."

"Good God, Ancram! what do you mean?"

"I told you that the least terrible rumour about Castalia was the rumour that her mind was affected."

Lord Seely's face was almost lead-coloured. He pressed his hands one on each side of his head, with a gesture of hopeless bewilderment. "This is the most appalling thing!" he murmured, and his voice was scarcely audible as he said it.

"I had to make my choice without delay, Lord Seely. I regret to inflict this blow on you in your present suffering state of body; but, if I spared you, I could not have spared Castalia. I chose to spare my wife."

"Yes, yes;—quite—quite right. Spare Castalia! I—I thank you, Ancram—for choosing to spare her rather than me." The poor little nobleman's face was convulsed by a kind of spasm for a second or two, and then he burst into tears, sobbing out, with his face hidden in his trembling hands, "What is to be done? Gracious heavens! what is to be done?"

"I talked about choosing to spare Castalia," said Algernon, looking at her uncle with a sort of furtive curiosity and a feeling that was more akin to contempt than pity, "but I don't know how long it may be in my power, or anyone's power, to spare her. The only chance for either of us is to get away out of Whitford as quickly as possible."

"But—but— My head is so confused. I am stunned, Ancram—stunned! But—what was I going to say? Oh! have you interrogated Castalia? What representations does she make as to the money? There is so much to be said—to be asked. It cannot be but that there is some error. It cannot be. My poor Castalia!"

"Interrogating Castalia would be quite useless; worse than useless. You don't know what her behaviour and temper have been lately. She is utterly unreasonable. Ask anyone who knows our house in Whitford; ask my servants what my home has been latterly. I have bought the honour of your lordship's alliance somewhat dear."

Lord Seely sank down in his chair as if he had been struck, and his grey head drooped on his breast. "What can I do, Ancram?" he asked, in a tone so contrasted in its feebleness with his usual self-assured, rather strident voice, that it might have touched some persons with compassion. "What can I do?" Then he seemed to make a strong effort to recover some energy of manner, and added, "If it were not for this unfortunate attack which disables me, I would return with you to Whitford to-night. I would see Castalia myself."

Algernon heartily congratulated himself on the fit of gout which kept Lord Seely a prisoner. There was nothing he less desired than that her uncle should be confronted with Castalia. He represented that the only efficacious help Lord Seely could give under the circumstances would be to furnish them with money to pay

their debts and leave Whitford forthwith. He pointed out that Castalia must have felt this herself, when she wrote urging her uncle to get them some post abroad. Algernon became eager and persuasive as he spoke, and offered a glimpse to the man before him, whose pride and whose affections were equally wounded, of a future which should make some amends for the bitter present—a future in which Castalia might have peace and safety at least, and in which her mind might regain its balance. He would be gentle, and patient, and tender with her, and, if they were in a position that offered no such temptations as the post-office at Whitford, the anxiety to all who regarded Castalia would be greatly lessened. Lord Seely was, as he had said, too much stunned by the whole interview, to follow Algernon's rapid eloquence step by step. He felt that he must have time for reflection; besides, he was physically exhausted. He bade Algernon leave him for a time, and return later in the day. He would give orders that he should be admitted at once. "You—you have not seen my lady?" said Lord Seely hesitatingly.

"No; I purposely avoided doing so. She would have naturally inquired the cause of my unexpected presence in town, and I could speak of all this trouble to nobody on earth but yourself, my lord."

"Right, right, Ancram. But my lady will not fail to learn that you have been here, and we must give her some reason."

"I can say, if you choose, that I came to London on post-office business."

Lord Seely bowed his head almost humbly, and Algernon left him. He left him with an air of sombre resignation, but inwardly he felt himself to be master of the situation.

Now Publishing,

"DAVY'S LOCKER,"

BEING THE

EXTRA DOUBLE NUMBER

FOR

CHRISTMAS, 1875.

PRICE FOURPENCE.

To be had of all Booksellers, and at the Railway Bookstalls.

The Right of Translating Articles from ALL THE YEAR ROUND is reserved by the Authors.